UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.183/SR.190
8 October 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 190th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 5 Ocbober 1992, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

2. The CHAIRMAN said that Mr. Alarcón de Quesada, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, had left New York a few months earlier in order to take up the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. Mr. Hidalgo Basulto, First Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, was the new Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, and he had expressed his readiness to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

3. Mr. Hidalgo Basulto (Cuba) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

REPORT ON THE UNITED NATIONS EUROPEAN SEMINAR ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, MALTA, 27-29 July 1992.

4. The CHAIRMAN said that the Seventh European Seminar on the Question of Palestine had been held from 27 to 29 July in Malta. The Committee had been represented by a delegation consisting of himself as Chairman of the Seminar and head of delegation; Mr. Camilleri (Malta) as Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Seminar; Mr. Batiouk (Ukraine) as Vice-Chairman of the Seminar, and Mr. Al-Kidwa (Permanent Observer of Palestine).

5. The formal opening session had been addressed by Mr. de Marco, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta; Mr. Abu Hejla, Director-General of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who had read out a message from Mr. Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization; and himself on behalf of the Committee. The Secretary-General had been represented by Mr. Giacomelli, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, who had read out an address by the Secretary-General at a plenary meeting of the Seminar. The closing session had been addressed by Mr. Aquilina, Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the representative of Palestine, and himself, on behalf of the Committee.

6. A total of six meetings had been held and 15 experts from Europe and the United States, as well as Palestinians and Israelis, had presented papers at two round tables: Round Table I: "International action to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory" and Round Table II: "Efforts to promote the implementation of United Nations resolutions on the Question of Palestine and the Situation in the Middle East". Representatives of 10 Governments, Palestine, one United Nations body, one United Nations specialized agency, one intergovernmental

(The Chairman)

organization and nine non-governmental organizations had attended the Seminar. For the first time the Commission of the European Communities had assigned an expert to participate in the Seminar and make a statement on humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

7. The documents containing the conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar had been distributed to all members and observers of the Committee; the report on the Seminar proceedings would be issued in due course as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights. A brief account of the Seminar had also been included in the monthly bulletin prepared by the Division for Palestinian Rights. In addition, the conclusions and recommendations would be annexed to the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

8. The Committee delegation had been pleased that the deliberations in the Seminar had been marked by a sense of urgency and determination to work together in order to develop concrete ideas for the future. It had felt that the discussions were substantive and productive and covered a wide range of topics, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the positions of the parties to the conflict, and helping to identify important issues for further discussion.

9. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to take note of the conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar.

10. It was so decided.

REPORT ON THE EUROPEAN NGO SYMPOSIUM AND INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, GENEVA, 24-28 AUGUST 1992

11. The CHAIRMAN said that the delegation of the Committee to the European NGO Symposium and the International NGO Meeting, in addition to himself, had consisted of Mr. Camilleri (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee, Mr. Batiouk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations, and Mr. Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine. Mr. Ennaceur, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations Office at Geneva, had also joined the delegation.

12. The Sixth United Nations European NGO Symposium had had the theme "Working for Peace - European Coordination". It had been attended by 99 non-governmental organizations (47 as participants and 52 as observers). A number of representatives from Governments, United Nations bodies and international governmental organizations had also attended the Symposium as observers. The formal opening session had been addressed by himself, on behalf of the Committee, by the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva and by the Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP).

13. Eight panelists and resource persons had made presentations at the Symposium. The programme of the Symposium had included two plenary sessions

(The Chairman)

which had considered "The Responsibilities of European Governmental and Non-governmental Bodies Towards the Palestinian People" and "Report by the ECCP Members on their Committee's Activities During the Period August 1991 to August 1992". Two workshops had discussed "Lobbying of Governments and Parliamentarians" and "Raising of Public Awareness of the Palestine Issue by European NGOs". The Symposium had also heard three reports on ongoing projects by NGOs, namely "Olive Trees", "Palestinian Family Reunification" and "Protection of Palestinian Children". The Symposium had adopted a declaration, copies of which had been distributed by the Secretariat.

14. It would be recalled that the two NGO meetings had been prepared in consultation with the European Coordinating Committee and the International Coordinating Committee of NGOs, respectively. The themes chosen and the speakers invited had been decided upon in the light of current developments, keeping in mind the needs and activities of the NGO community in the European and other regions.

15. The theme of the International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine had been "Protection and Statehood". The meeting had been attended by 255 non-governmental organizations (176 participants and 59 observers), as well as representatives of 41 Governments, six United Nations bodies and three intergovernmental organizations.

16. The opening session had been addressed by Mr. Blanca, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, on behalf of the Secretary-General; by the Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP); and by himself on behalf of the Committee. Addresses had been made by Mr. Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and Mr. Tambo, National Chairman of the African National Congress of South Africa.

17. Twenty-eight panelists and resource persons had made presentations on the panels and in the workshops. The programme had consisted of three panels which dealt with "Protection", "Statehood" and "The NGO Process". Twelve working groups and task forces had been established to consider specific topics. A final declaration had been adopted, copies of which had been distributed by the Secretariat.

18. The delegation of the Committee was satisfied with the outcome of the two meetings and had pledged the Committee's continued cooperation with the work of the NGOs and their coordinating committees.

19. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to take note of the declarations adopted at the two events.

20. It was so decided.

REPORT ON THE TENTH SUMMIT CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT OF THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES, JAKARTA, 1-6 SEPTEMBER 1992

21. The CHAIRMAN said that the final document of the Tenth Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries would be issued as a working document of the General Assembly. The Summit Conference had been preceeded by a Ministerial Meeting from 28 to 30 August 1992. He had represented the Committee as a guest of the Indonesian Government; Mr. Al-Kidwa, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, had participated as a member of the delegation of Palestine, and Mr. Camilleri (Malta) had attended as a member of the delegation of Malta.

22. In his statement to the Ministerial Meeting he had stressed aspects that were a source of hope in the current situation, while cautioning that prudence was needed so as to avoid exagerated optimism. He had reiterated the Committee's view that, although all the United Nations resolutions on the subject were being taken into account in the ongoing negotiations, the direct involvement of the United Nations was essential. There had been a long debate on the Palestinian question at the ministerial level and at the Summit. The Committee of Six on Palestine had met concurrently with the Summit and had submitted a report; the position of the non-aligned countries on the question of Palestine had been broadly reflected in the final document of the Conference. The Palestinian delegation, led by Mr. Arafat, had carried out remarkable work and had greatly inspired the participants at the Conference.

OTHER MATTERS

23. The CHAIRMAN said that the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 1992 from 29 June to 31 July, had considered the item entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian People" and had recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution on the item which, inter alia, would recognize the need for convening a seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory; in that regard, the General Assembly would also suggest to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People that it consider, in its programme for 1992-1993, convening such a seminar. After the adoption of the draft resolution by the General Assembly, the Committee, while considering its programme of work for 1993, would obviously take that suggestion into consideration.

24. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) stated that, according to the United Nations press release issued following the September press encounter organized in Lisbon, Portugal, by the Department of Public Information in connection with the Palestinian Programmes, the participants wished to hold the next encounter in Jerusalem. The Secretary-General, however, should note that to do so would contravene all United Nations resolutions which regarded as null and void any Israeli measure that changed the legal status of Jerusalem. Moreover, the statement made in the concluding session by Mr. Giacomelli, the representative of the Secretary-General, did not reflect

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

the overall view of the participants, in particular the Palestinians. His delegation could not accept any attempts made to adopt positions which ran counter to the basic positions held by the United Nations.

25. The computer-based information system to be provided to the Division for Palestinian Rights pursuant to resolution 46/74 B (1991) would qualitatively improve and expedite the Committee's work. He hoped that the Division would be able to begin implementing the first part of the project during the current General Assembly session. Emphasizing the importance of the decision made by the Economic and Social Council concerning a special seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, he further hoped that the Committee would adopt the relevant resolutions in that connection.

26. The closing address at the Tenth Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement had affirmed the Movement's commitment to the work of the Committee. Moreover, the fact that the Palestinian cause was one of only two regional items contained in the Jakarta Message demonstrated the Movement's political commitment to that cause.

27. The Ministerial Meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference held the previous week in New York had confirmed and renewed the commitment of the member States to the Palestinian cause, notably by adopting the report produced by the Palestine Committee. The report had introduced several new points: first, it noted that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility vis-à-vis the Palestinian people; second, it underscored the need to implement United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 681 (1990), and ensure that the General Secretariat fulfilled its mandates; third, it called upon the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to devote more attention to the Committee's work.

28. Turning to the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations, he said that his delegation had been fully briefed on the sixth round of the bilateral talks held in Washington by leading members of the Palestinian delegation and by Arab foreign ministers. Unfortunately, no progress had been achieved during the talks, despite the optimism based, among other factors, on expectations of the new Israeli Government. Regrettably, Israel's present position on territory was no different from that of the former Likud Government, particularly where settlements were concerned. In fact, the United States-Israeli loan guarantee agreement, involving over US$ 10 billion, had enabled the Israeli authorities to build 11,000 new settlements in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Furthermore, Israeli human rights practices also remained unchanged. For instance, over 5,000 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons had recently been on hunger strike in protest at the inhumane conditions of their detention.

29. Referring to the address made before the General Assembly the previous week by Shimon Peres, the Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs, he said, firstly, that it reflected the views of Mr. Peres himself and not those of the

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

Israeli Government. Secondly, it was negative in substance, particularly given Israel's constant refusal to recognize Palestinian rights to self-determination and to implement Security Council resolution 242 (1967), in addition to its continued building of settlements and its refusal to accept the notion of withdrawing from territory.

30. As for the multilateral negotiations, they were in utter chaos: none of the five committees concerned had Syria or Lebanon as members, two committees did not have Palestine as a member and two committees were under boycott from Israel. Furthermore, the United Nations was not a member of any committee, as the Secretary-General was insistent that the Organization should be officially invited to participate. Although some effort had been made to improve the situation, particularly concerning United Nations participation and modification of Israel's position, it remained to be seen whether any improvement would occur. He would keep the Committee informed of any progress achieved in that respect.

31. The CHAIRMAN hoped that the press section of the Department of Public Information would take note of the comments made by the Permanent Observer of Palestine and thanked him for the important points he had communicated.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.